

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

12 November 2013

Present:

Councillor P.A. Broom (Chairman)

Councillors:

F. Ayers	M. Bushnell	C.M. Frazer
A. Ayub	C.A. Davis	A.E. Friday
C.A. Bannister	R.D. Dunn	I.T.E. Harvey

Apologies: Councillors M. J. Madams, M.W. Rough and S.D. Taylor.
Councillor V.J. Leighton, Cabinet member for Planning and Corporate Governance and the Leader, Councillor R.L. Watts

In attendance - The following Cabinet members attended the meeting and took part in the discussion on those items relevant to their Portfolio:

Councillor A.J. Mitchell, Cabinet member for Environment (incl. Parks and Waste Management)

Councillor D. Patel, Cabinet member for Parking Services and ICT

302/13 Election of Vice-Chairman

Following the appointment of Councillor D. Patel to the Cabinet in October 2013, a vacancy had arisen for Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

It was moved and seconded and

RESOLVED that Councillor A.E. Friday be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

303/13 Disclosures of Interest

There were none.

304/13 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2013 were approved as a correct record.

305/13 Matters Arising

No matters were raised.

306/13 Call in of a Leader, Cabinet or Cabinet Member Decision

No decisions had been called in.

307/13 Capital Monitoring

The Committee received an update on the capital expenditure against the budget position of the schemes within the capital programme for the period April to September 2013.

The Chief Finance Officer reported that £544k had been spent to date, which represented 29% of the revised budget. The projected outturn showed that there was an anticipated spend of £1.857m which represented 98.1% of the revised budget.

It was also noted that the Cabinet would be asked to approve:

1. A reduction in provision for the Kenyngton Manor Pavilion project for 2013/14 of £33k and an increase in provision for 2014-15 of £33k.
2. An increase in provision for the Stanwell CCTV project by £18,110 to cover the actual expenditure incurred which is offset in full by increased funding from A2D.
3. A reduction in provision for Meals on Wheels programme for 2013/14 by £50k as the budget for Meals on Wheels vans is no longer required.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that the report of the Chief Finance Officer outlining the capital spend position for the six month period to September 2013 be noted; and
- (2) to support the following recommendations to Cabinet:
 1. that the Capital Programme provision for Kenyngton Manor Pavilion be re-phased with the 2013/14 provision reduced by £33k and the provision for 2014-15 increased by £33k.
 2. that the budget for the Stanwell CCTV project be increased by £18,110 to cover the actual expenditure incurred which is offset in full by increased funding from A2D.
 3. to note that the budget for Meals on Wheels vans is no longer required and the 2013/14 programme be reduced by £50k.

308/13 Revenue Monitoring

The Committee received an update on the net revenue expenditure and forecast outturn position for the period April to September 2013.

The Chief Finance Officer reported that the forecast outturn at net expenditure level was £12.151m which resulted in a projected favourable variance of £323k, after taking into account the use of carry forwards.

RESOLVED that the report of the Chief Finance Officer outlining the current net revenue spend and forecast position for the six month period to September 2013 be noted.

309/13 Treasury Management Half-Yearly Report 2013/14

The Committee received an update on treasury management activities for the first half year to 30 September 2013.

The Chief Finance Officer reported that the projected investment return was expected to fall in line with the budgeted figure of £345k. Diversifying part of the Council's portfolio into pooled investment funds had been beneficial to returns and should help maintain overall investment returns into the future.

The Chairman congratulated Terry Collier and his team and Councillor Evans for their efforts in keeping the Council's funds steady and safe whilst facing difficult economic circumstances.

RESOLVED that the report of the Chief Finance Officer, setting out the treasury position achieved during the first six months of 2013/14 and the financial environment in global markets, be noted.

310/13 Remote Working project update

The Committee discussed an update report providing the main conclusions and recommendations from the Council's remote working pilot project, with the Assistant Chief Executive (Lee O'Neil) and Environmental Health Manager.

The report gave information on the potential number of Council staff who could work remotely and the likely costs to support this project against the possible rental income.

The Committee was concerned that there was an appropriate document management system in place, that analysis was undertaken of costings and the payback period for any investment, and that officers understood the key challenge of the associated cultural change.

RESOLVED to note the update on Remote Working and the conclusions and recommendations listed in Appendix A to the report of the Assistant Chief Executive subject to:

1. there being a rigorous analysis of the cost implications and the payback period if this project is moved forward;
2. a robust document management system being implemented and
3. sufficient attention being paid to the impact of cultural change on the staff involved and provision of training for those affected.

311/13 Local Council Tax Support Scheme and Council Tax Discounts and Premia 2014/15 onwards

The Committee received a report on the Local Council Tax Support Scheme and Council Tax Discounts and Premia from 2014/15 onwards which were being reviewed due to a number of key changes leading to a future on-going funding gap.

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The Head of Planning and Housing Strategy explained that there was also a more fundamental issue to consider of whether or not the required council tax support savings should be entirely borne by the council tax benefits claimants or not.

She updated the Committee on the outcome of the consultation to which 700 responses had been received of the 6500 surveys distributed. The responses were evenly split on their preferred option.

The Committee discussed the two options under the Council Tax Support Scheme and the two under the Discounts and Premia which had been consulted upon.

The Committee felt it was important that residents were given some certainty about future payments and therefore agreed that the scheme adopted should be for a minimum of two years, i.e. 2014/15 and 2015/16.

RESOLVED unanimously to recommend Cabinet to agree:

- (a) Option 2 in respect of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme as set out in paragraph 3.5 of the report of the Assistant Chief Executive to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12 November 2013 and
- (b) Option 1 in respect of the Discounts and Premia as set out in paragraph 3.2 of the report of the Assistant Chief Executive to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12 November

312/13 Leader's Task Groups

The Committee received updates on progress with the work of the three Leader's Task Groups looking at Economic Development, Fixed Assets and Environment and Waste.

The Committee discussed the proposals for Laleham Park with the Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor A.J. Mitchell.

The Committee received an update on the Economic Strategy programme from the Deputy Head of Planning and Housing Strategy. The Strategy was due to be considered for adoption by Council on 19 December 2013.

RESOLVED to note the work undertaken to date by the Leader's Task Groups and the progress made toward the adoption of an Economic Strategy.

313/13 Emergency Plan update 2013/14

The Committee received an update report highlighting key changes made in the latest review of the Emergency Plan 2013/14.

The Committee discussed the report with the Portfolio Holder, Councillor D. Patel and noted that she had asked the Emergency Planning officer to arrange a seminar for the Committee on the Emergency Plan.

The Committee was concerned that the role of councillors in an emergency was made clear in the Plan and that councillors were properly briefed. The Committee was happy to work with the Portfolio Holder and officers on this.

The Chairman thanked the Emergency Planning officer, Nick Moon, for the huge amount of work he had done to produce this good document in the form of the Emergency Plan.

RESOLVED to note the update subject to:

1. more information being provided in the Plan to explain the role of councillors as community leaders in an emergency situation and
2. a recommendation that it should be mandatory for all councillors to receive and read the Emergency Plan document.

314/13 Project Management methodology update

The Committee received an update report on progress made with current projects and thanked the Head of Customer Services, Linda Norman and her team for their work.

RESOLVED to note the update report on Project Management methodology, subject to:

1. strongly recommending MAT to adopt the next steps as set out in the report and
2. agreeing the importance of sharing best practice across the authority.

315/13 Social Media

The Committee received the report of the Chief Executive on the need for further resources to promote the use of Social Media in the Council, which they discussed with the Head of Customer Services.

The Committee recognised the importance of a coherent, professional social media operation for the Council. The Chairman suggested there was no need to request a background in, and knowledge of, local government for a new post to promote, expand and maintain the Council's Social Media strategy.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the report on Social Media and
- (2) support the allocation of extra resources for Social Media provided this is properly costed and the benefits and payback demonstrated.

316/13 Replacement Telephony System

The Committee received an update report from the Assistant Chief Executive on progress with the implementation of Lync as the replacement telephony system for the Council.

The report outlined the options analysis and confirmed that Advanced 365 had been given preferred supplier status. It set out the timeline for implementation of the new system.

RESOLVED that the report on a replacement telephony system be noted.

317/13 Localism Act – Impact on Service Areas

The Chairman drew to the Committee's attention the reports from all Heads of Service on what each service area was doing to address the issue of Localism.

She suggested that a small group of councillors consider the reports in more detail and report back to a future meeting.

RESOLVED that a sub-group comprising Councillors Friday, Ayub and R. Dunn look at the reports on Localism in more detail and whether the Council could be doing more to benefit residents and report back to a future meeting for this Committee's further consideration.

318/13 Streetscene update

The Committee received an update on the work and performance of the Streetscene department and discussed this with the Head of Streetscene.

Members of the Committee asked questions about fly tipping, recycling rates and how the service communicates performance to residents.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Streetscene, Jackie Taylor and her team for their dedication to the residents' service.

RESOLVED to note the report subject to receiving an update on the Council's plans for improving recycling rates and considering how service performance is gauged and monitored.

319/13 Cabinet Forward Plan

The Committee received the Cabinet Forward Plan.

RESOLVED to note the Forward Plan.

320/13 Work Programme

The Chairman advised that the topics on the work programme for the January meeting included the Budget review, project Management and Customer Relations Procurement.

She asked members to contact her if they had any further thoughts on topics they would like to see included for future meetings.

RESOLVED to note the arrangements for the work programme.

321/13 Any Other Business

No other business reported.